



Milwaukee County Board of Supervisors

Supervisor Marina Dimitrijevic, 4th District

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Government, Business and Non-profit Leaders Celebrate Launch of Milwaukee County Urban Orchards with Ceremonial Tree Planting

The Milwaukee County Organic Fruit Orchards Are the Largest Such Orchards in the United States and are Expected to Bear Fruit Within Three Years

MILWAUKEE - County Supervisor Marina Dimitrijevic and Supervisor Steve Taylor of Franklin joined Milwaukee Parks Director John Dargle, Oak Creek Mayor Steve Scaffidi, Will Allen of Growing Power and Ken Lane of Stark Bro's Nurseries & Orchards Co. for a ceremonial fruit tree planting in Oak Creek today, to celebrate the early success of a unique partnership between government, non-profits and private business to create the largest organic urban orchard in the United States.

"Milwaukee County faces acute challenges, including inter-related health disparities," Dimitrijevic said. "In the long run, infant mortality, obesity and high blood pressure are more costly to the community than an upfront, one-time investment in these partnerships with local organizations to create healthier options for our neighbors."

"The food from these orchards will go to schools, restaurants and communities. Not only will these trees and plants provide food, but they will create jobs and uplift the community," said Will Allen, Farmer, Founder and CEO of [Growing Power](http://growingpower.org).

"We are very pleased to be a part of this unique and special initiative offering Milwaukee County parkland that will contribute to improving our community's health and wellness. Today, we celebrate improving access to healthy food and seeing this initiative come to fruition," said John Dargle, Jr., Director of Milwaukee County Parks, Recreation & Culture.

"It is immensely gratifying to see these unsold trees be put to such good, practical use," says Ken Lane, Stark Bro's Chief Marketing Officer. "Soon there will be fresh, organic apples, peaches, plums, pears, cherries, strawberries and asparagus for neighborhood families who otherwise might not have access to such nutritious and delicious home-grown food."

Hundreds of fruit trees donated by St. Louis area [Stark Bro's Nurseries & Orchards Co.](#) are already planted on eight acres of county land in Oak Creek, and on two acres of county land in McGovern Park on Milwaukee's far north side. The first plantings of apple, pear, and plum trees, in the ground since August, are expected to yield fruit within three years.

Fruit from the orchards will be processed at the Growing Power facility on Silver Spring Dr. and made available to public schools, restaurants and community centers. The Hunger Task Force will operate a mobile market to serve residents who live in food deserts.

Will Allen, Growing Power's "Farmer, Founder and CEO", is internationally recognized as a leader in urban agriculture and is the recipient of a MacArthur "Genius Grant" and frequent visitor and collaborator with Michelle Obama on issues such as improving nutrition and health of America's children. Growing Power plants orchards and gardens on vacant lots, donated property, and rooftops across Milwaukee County

St. Louis area Stark Bro's, currently in its 200th year of business, is best-known for its discovery of both Red and Golden Delicious apples. The family-owned company has been donating trees and fruit plants to Growing Power since 2014, when they delivered more than 4,700 edible plants and fruit trees in refrigerated semi-trailers.

Supervisor Dimitrijevic and Supervisor Jason Haas, along with then-Supervisor Khalif Rainey contacted Growing Power in the spring of 2015 to create the "Sowing, Empowering, Eliminating Deserts of food," or SEED, initiative, and establish urban orchards to address acute health disparities through the eradication of food deserts.

The project will ultimately see 3000 fruit trees planted on Milwaukee County lands, along with 16,250 strawberry plants and 4,000 asparagus plants.

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